

**COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND RESOURCES**



***OPENING STATEMENT OF  
CHAIRMAN DARRELL ISSA  
MAY 9, 2005***

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Today's record high gasoline prices are affecting every sector of the American economy from consumers and businesses to public and private agencies. For Californians, filling up their gas tank is not a luxury, it is a necessity. They have to fill up to get to work, take the kids to school, and go to the grocery store.

In recent weeks, President Bush has shown leadership by calling for action on energy development and conservation. He pledged to address the root causes that are driving up gas prices, encourage oil-producing nations to maximize their production and vowed that consumers will not be gouged at the pumps. Since coming to Washington, the President has stressed the need for a comprehensive energy policy. Last month the House passed the Energy Policy Act of 2005 and now it is time for the Senate to enact this legislation that will establish a national energy strategy to reduce consumer costs.

The President has also stressed the need to promote greater energy independence by harnessing the power of technology to create new sources of energy and make more efficient use of existing resources. Since 2001, I have driven a Toyota Prius and it is here with me today. New technologies, like hybrid vehicles, will play an absolutely essential role in lowering overall energy costs for consumers and it is important that Congress continue to reward the development and use of these energy-saving innovations.

I understand that people are frustrated and outraged with the soaring cost of gasoline. As consumers struggle with increasing prices, we hear about oil companies with enormous profits, increased global oil demand, and limited plans for investment in refineries and petroleum infrastructure.

I believe that it is important that the Subcommittee hear from consumers and address your questions regarding gasoline prices. For the past week, I have allowed the public to access a website where they could submit a question to be asked of the panel of witnesses. I will ask some of those questions this afternoon.

The issues we will address today are serious and go to the core of our economic well-being and standard of living.

Hopefully, the witnesses today can enlighten us on these issues and possibly point us toward some productive solutions. I look forward to the testimony of the witnesses. They include:

- Mr. John Cook, Director of the Petroleum Division, Office of Oil and Gas, Energy Information Administration, U.S. Department of Energy

- Mr. Jim Wells, Director, Natural Resources and Environment, U.S. Government Accountability Office
- Mr. Pat Perez, Transportation Energy Division, California Energy Commission
- Ms. Rayola Dougher, Manager, Energy Market Issues, American Petroleum Institute.

I thank you in the audience for attending this hearing. I now yield to my colleague, Representative Diane Watson for her opening statement.